

## Message Text

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43

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07

LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 PA-02 PRS-01 USIA-15 /060 W

----- 004199

R 260939Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6751

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

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USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, AU

SUBJECT: 8TH CONGRESS OF AUSTRIAN TRADE UNION FEDERATION

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: SOCIALIST LEADERS OF AUSTRIAN  
TRADE UNION FEDERATION (ATUF) ARE DISTRESSED OVER OUTCOME  
OF 8TH ATUF CONGRESS SEPTEMBER 15-19. CONGRESS CREATED  
CLEFT BETWEEN SOCIALIST AND CHRISTIAN FACTIONS THAT  
COULD THREATEN UNITY OF AUSTRIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT.  
IN PROCESS, ATUF'S DEMOCRATIC AND A POLITICAL IMAGE

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WAS TARNISHED JUST BEFORE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION

ON OCTOBER 5. CONGRESS REENDORSED AUSTRIA'S  
UNIQUE "SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP" FOR WAGE/PRICE MANAGEMENT  
BUT PROPOSED "FOR DISCUSSION" WITH ATUF'S EMPLOYER  
AND GOVERNMENT PARTNERS NEW PLAN FOR CAPITAL FORMATION  
UNDER TRADE UNION CONTROL THAT COULD UNDERMINE BASIS  
UPON WHICH PARTNERSHIP RESTS. TWO TOP CONTENDERS FOR  
FUTURE LEADERSHIP OF ATUF WERE ELECTED TO MAJOR OFFICES  
THAT ENHANCE THEIR PROSPECTS OF SUCCEEDING PRESIDENT  
BENYA SHOULD BENYA RETIRE IN 1979. END SUMMARY.

2. LABOR LEAGUE (OAAB) OF AUSTRIAN PEOPLE'S PARTY  
CAPTURED CHAIRMANSHIP OF ATUF'S CHRISTIAN FACTION JUST  
BEFORE ATUF CONGRESS IN CLOSE CONTEST THAT PITTED  
OAAB GENERAL SECRETARY JOHANN GASSNER AGAINST HANS  
KLINGLER, CENTRAL SECRETARY OF UNION OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL  
WHITE COLLAR WORKERS. LEADER OF CHRISTIAN FACTION  
HAD OCCUPIED ONE OF THREE ATUF VICE PRESIDENCIES FOR  
30 YEARS, BUT SOCIALIST DELEGATES AT CONGRESS REFUSED  
TO ACCEPT GASSNER, WHO RECEIVED ONLY 73 OF 211 VOTES  
NEEDED FOR ELECTION. BY NARROW MARGIN, CHRISTIAN  
FACTION THEN REFUSED TO NOMINATE ANY OTHER CANDIDATE,  
AND ONE VICE PRESIDENCY WAS LEFT VACANT.

3. TO BLOCK GASSNER, CONGRESS ADOPTED NEW RULES THAT  
REQUIRED INDIVIDUAL AND SECRET BALLOTS FOR TOP ATUF  
OFFICES AND PREVENTED BLOCK CONSIDERATION OF  
NOMINATING COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS AS IN PAST.  
EFFORT TO DISQUALIFY GASSNER THROUGH ADOPTION OF  
SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR CANDIDATES FOR TOP ATUF  
POSTS, WHICH WOULD HAVE REQUIRED FOUR YEARS PRIOR  
SERVICE IN OFFICE OF ATUF OR AFFILIATED TRADE UNION,  
WAS SUCCESSFULLY RESISTED BY ATUF LEADERS BUT ADOPTED  
BY CONGRESS FOR APPLICATION IN FUTURE ELECTIONS.

4. PUBLICLY, ATUF SOCIALIST LEADERS CLAIM ACTION OF  
CONGRESS PRESERVED ATUF INDEPENDENCE OF POLITICAL  
PARTIES. PRIVATELY, HOWEVER, THEY CONCEDE THAT ATUF  
IS NOW POLITICIZED AND THAT CARE MUST BE TAKEN IF  
DISPUTE WITH CHRISTIAN TRADE UNION LEADERSHIP IS NOT TO  
SPLIT AUSTRIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT, WHICH HAS BEEN UNIFIED  
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SINCE 1945. SOCIALIST LEADERS ARE PARTICULARLY CONCERNED  
THAT DEMOCRATIC AND ASSIDUOUSLY PROMOTED APOLITICAL  
IMAGE OF ATUF HAS BEEN SERIOUSLY TARNISHED IN MIDST  
OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION CAMPAIGN THAT WILL DETERMINE  
FATE OF SOCIALIST-LED GOVERNMENT ON OCTOBER 5.

5. AUSTRIA'S UNIQUE SYSTEM OF WAGE/PRICE MANAGEMENT  
THROUGH JOINT COMMISSIONS OF REPRESENTATIVES OF TRADE

UNIONS, MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS, AND GOVERNMENT - ITS SO-CALLED "SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP" - WAS AGAIN ENDORSED BY ATUF. MORE IMPORTANTLY, IT RECEIVED PRACTICAL SUPPORT FROM ATUF PRESIDENT ANTON BENYA, WHO TOLD DELEGATES THAT DETERIORATING ECONOMIC SITUATION AS WELL AS REAL WAGE INCREASES WHICH HAVE IN RECENT YEARS EXCEEDED ATUF'S OBJECTIVE OF THREE PERCENT ANNUALLY MILITATE FOR SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCED WAGE DEMANDS IN FORTHCOMING CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS. AMBITIOUS PLAN FOR CAPITAL FORMATION UNDER TRADE UNION CONTROL WAS PROPOSED BY ATUF ECONOMIC DIRECTOR THOMAS LACHS BUT ADOPTED ONLY AS "BASIS FOR DISCUSSION" WITH OTHER SOCIAL PARTNERS. IF PRESSED BY ATUF, LACHS' PROPOSAL COULD UNDERMINE GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT CONCERNING EXISTING DIVISION BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SHARES OF AUSTRIA'S PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY, WHICH IS ONE OF BASES UPON WHICH "SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP" RESTS.

6. ALFRED DALLINGER, PRESIDENT OF ATUF'S LARGEST AFFILIATE (NON-GOVERNMENTAL WHITE COLLAR WORKERS) WAS ELECTED TO ATUF VICE PRESIDENCY VACATED BY HIS PREDECESSOR AS UNION PRESIDENT, AUSTRIA'S VICE CHANCELLOR AND MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS RUDOLF HAUSER. KHARL SEKANINA, ACTING PRESIDENT OF ATUF'S SECOND LARGEST AFFILIATE (METAL WORKERS) WAS ELECTED CHAIRMAN OF ATUF'S SOCIALIST FACTION, POSTION VACATED BY FORMER PRESIDENT OF MUNICIPAL WORKERS AND RETIRING LEADER OF SOCIALIST PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP, ROBERT WEISZ. DALLINGER AND SEKANINA, WHO ARE FRONT RUNNERS TO SUCCEED AS ATUF PRESIDENT SHOULD BENYA RETIRE IN 1979, BOTH GARNER ADVANTAGES FROM THEIR NEW POSITIONS. PRESIDENT BENYA (WHO IS ALSO PRESIDENT OF METAL WORKERS), VICE PRESIDENT HANS BOCK (PRESIDENT UNCLASSIFIED

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OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS), EXECUTIVE SECRETARY AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR ALFRED STROER, AND EXECUTIVE SECRETARY ERICH HOFSTETTER WERE REELECTED OVERWHELMINGLY AND WITHOUT OPPOSITION. BUCHANAN

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** POLICIES, CHRISTIANS, LABOR UNIONS, LABOR OBJECTIVES, MEETINGS, DISSIDENT FACTIONS, SOCIALISTS  
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**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** MartinML  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 19 MAR 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <19 MAR 2003 by maustmc>; APPROVED <11 FEB 2004 by MartinML>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
06 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** 8TH CONGRESS OF AUSTRIAN TRADE UNION FEDERATION  
**TAGS:** ELAB, AU, ATUF-AUSTRIAN TRADE UNION FEDERATIO  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006